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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 001247

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TK](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: A DEEPLY SKEPTICAL KOCHARIAN AGREES TO HEAR OUT  
ANY CONCRETE TURKISH PROPOSAL

Classified By: CDA R.V. Perina, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: President Kocharian made clear to CDA his profound disbelief in Turkey's sincerity on rapprochement, but grudgingly agreed to hear out any Turkish proposal. Kocharian complained at length about past bad faith from Turkey, and said he considers talking with Turkey a lost cause for at least another generation. Meanwhile, he said Armenia would make its own way as best it can. The president has just four months left to his term, and we find him increasingly irascible on things he does not want to do. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) During the course of a previously-scheduled meeting on another subject, CDA spoke with President Kocharian October 16 to persuade him that there may be a unique, short-term opportunity for Armenia fundamentally to change the dynamic of Armenia's relations with Turkey. He said that the pressures created by the Armenian "genocide" resolution (AGR), combined with the new, more liberal and flexible presidency of Abdullah Gul, to create an opportunity that has not existed before to try to improve the relationship with Turkey and de-link the Turkish border issue from the Nagorno-Karabkh dispute. He said that this opportunity would have to be seized in a package agreement before an AGR could be passed, because that would slam the door closed for a generation.

¶3. (C) Kocharian conveyed profound skepticism of Turkey's good faith. He said that Armenia has heard such messages from U.S. Administrations since independence, but no discussions with Turkey had ever amounted to anything real for Armenia. He said he did not doubt American intentions, but that many times in the past, Turkey has made much of a "new process" toward reconciliation. Each time, he argued, Armenia had gone along, only to find that the Turkish proposal had proved empty. Armenia has "not one concrete thing to show" for its years of off and on negotiations with Turkey. Kocharian said "You think this is the last opportunity for a generation. I believe there is no opportunity at all for at least a generation. Turkey is not ready, even at the level of society, to reach out to Armenia." The proof of this, Kocharian said, is that Turkey is spending so much money to build the railroad to Azerbaijan via Akhalkalaki, bypassing Armenia. There would be no point if Turkey were serious about opening the border with Armenia, which it could do any time it wished. Dismissing signs of change in Turkey, Kocharian cited PM Erdogan's reported comment last week that the border with Armenia will remain closed until N-K is resolved.

¶4. (C) At one point Kocharian said he was so disillusioned by years of Turkish bad faith that he really "did not give a damn anymore" about Turkey. Kocharian said that Armenia has had to accept the reality that its Turkish border will be closed for the foreseeable future. Even so, he said, Armenia is managing to thrive, citing the country's double-digit

economic growth of recent years to bolster his point. Armenia has had to turn to Iran for transit access to the wider world, and Iran has proved a much easier partner to deal with.

15. (C) Kocharian at first refused even to countenance the possibility of more GOAM meetings with Turkey, commenting that the tiniest steps by Armenia to meet Turkey halfway are instantly proclaimed by Turkey (and even by the U.S.), as evidence of a "process of rapprochement" that must not be disrupted. Kocharian said he was unwilling to be used by the Turks in this way again. After considerable prodding from the CDA, Kocharian agreed that he would not rule out opening quiet negotiations with Turkey, so long as these were kept out of the public eye, and did not become part of the campaign to derail an AGR.

16. (C) COMMENT: Kocharian will not be persuaded to talk seriously with the GOT unless the opening bid comes from Ankara and involves a concrete incentive for Armenia, such as a near-term commitment to crack open the border, at least by opening the railroad line. A historical commission is viewed as a Turkish ploy to take the "genocide" off the table and would be accepted by the Armenians only as part of a larger package. Armenians profoundly mistrust Turkey's intentions, and hint they are skeptical about U.S. motives as well. With just four months left in his term, Kocharian's irascible tendencies have only deepened, and he has less patience than ever for what he is convinced would be empty discussions. Kocharian in the end did not rule out a dialogue, but it is clearly up to the Turkish side to convince him that it would not be just another ploy to kill the AGR.  
PERINA